

March 21, 2003

The Honorable Ruth Ann Minner
Governor
Tatnall Building, 2nd Floor
150 William Penn Street
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Governor Minner:

I understand that the Legislature may be considering a proposal to have the State Lottery offer legalized gambling on sports teams at racetracks in Delaware.

I urge you and other state leaders to oppose such sports gambling legislation.

As I first learned during my playing days at the University of Delaware, the greatest threat to the integrity of sports is gambling. The history of sports and gambling is a sordid one. Gambling has brought nothing but ugliness to sports.

As an NFL player, I resent the idea of being used against my will as a pawn in a device to sell gambling. State lotteries based on numbers are one thing. Lotteries based on the honest efforts of athletes are an entirely different matter, one that distorts the perception of sports and fosters an atmosphere of suspicion and cynicism.

As a father of two daughters, I fear that the spread of state-sponsored sports gambling would destroy the values that sports can teach to future generations of American youth. Those values are already under heavy attack.

Sports should teach youngsters about hard work, preparation, teamwork and sportsmanship. State-sponsored sports gambling, however, would promote another set of values. Our children would learn instead that their local governments think sports are really about point spreads and betting slips, and that athletes such as myself and my Oakland Raiders teammates are poker chips in a government-sanctioned get-rich scheme.

I, respectfully, urge you to oppose legalized sports gambling legislation.


Rich Gannon